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2. NOTES ON THE BIRTH AND GROWTH OF A SLOW LORIS (*NYCTICEBUS COUCANG*) IN CAPTIVITY

A pregnant Slow Loris (*Nycticebus coucang*) received at the Nandankanan Biological Park (Orissa) on 1.ii.1971 from the forests of Assam, gave birth to a female young on 21.ii.1971. After delivery the mother weighed 1·4 kg.

The new born young weighed 50 gm and measured 14 cm in total length. The eyes were open at birth. The young had a coat of dense fur and numerous long glistening grey hairs were scattered throughout the body and projected far beyond the fur. These long hairs gradually disappeared when the young was about 11 weeks old. The body coat was grey throughout except the hands and limbs which were silvery white. The brown stripe on mid back was very prominent.

A single young is usually born (Prater 1971 ; Walker *et al.* 1964 ; Asdell 1964). Crandall (1965) reported that all births were of single young except the two twin births which were found dead within a day or two. The eyes of a Slow Loris young are open at birth (Crandall, loc. cit.). There is no mention of birth weight and size in the available literature.

Up to the age of seven weeks the young was seen clinging to the mother's abdomen and sucking her teat throughout the day. From the eighth week onwards and up to the age of 10 months, the young was clinging to the mother's abdomen throughout the day, partly keeping her hind quarters on the ground either in between the two limbs of the mother or over the mother's lap. Whenever attempts were made to handle or see the young during the day time, the mother with her baby curled up like a ball and twittered in annoyance. The mother cleaned the baby by licking. After sunset the young was always seen separated from the mother and was either clinging to the chainlink mesh wall or moving about in the house from the very first day. From the third day it was able to produce a feeble noise when handled and this noise immediately attracted the attention of the mother. Up to 8 weeks of age the young one was at times seen clinging to the abdomen of another

female kept in the same house. Later the second female did not allow the young to cling to her, probably because of its increased body weight. The young one took bananas for the first time at the age of about one month. The mother was able to crawl along with the baby clinging to her abdomen till the baby was seven months old.

Hill (1937 b) reported that the female Slow Loris may deliberately place her baby on the ground, later picking it up but this behaviour was neither observed by Crandall (loc. cit.) nor in this Park. Crandall (loc. cit.) reported that a young born in New York Zoological Park was found clinging either to the mother or to the father and he has never seen a mother touch an infant, beyond the usual cleaning treatment with the tongue. The young remains with the mother until it is as large as the mother (Prater, loc. cit.). The young appeared to be dependent upon the mother for at least 9 months or more and a youngster was seen nursing when it was as large as the parent (Crandall, loc. cit.).

The young one reached its maximum weight of 1605 gm at the age of 44 weeks (about 10 months) on 26.xii.1971. Weekly weight growth records were taken at the end of every week and an abstract of the growth records of this animal up to the age of one year is as follows :

Date	Age in weeks	Weight in kg.
21.ii.1971	Birth	0·050
21.iii.1971	4	0·140
18.iv.1971	8	0·295
16.v.1971	12	0·480
13.vi.1971	16	0·718
11.vii.1971	20	0·920
8.viii.1971	24	1·040
5.ix.1971	28	1·222
3.x.1971	32	1·315
31.x.1971	36	1·420
28.xi.1971	40	1·530
26.xii.1971	44	1·605
23.i.1972	48	1·590
20.ii.1972	52	1·588

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3. ON SOME MELANISTIC SPECIMENS OF HOUSE RAT, *RATTUS RATTUS* (LINNAEUS) [MAMMALIA : RODENTIA : MURIDAE]

It is a well-known fact that the coat colour of rodents, specially the rats, is subject to great variations. But extreme colour variations, commonly known as albinism and melanism, are rare. The latter has been reported in several species of mammals, including rodents, but I find no record of it in *Rattus rattus* (Linnaeus). It is therefore recorded here. The note is based on a collection of five adult rats, *Rattus rattus* (Linnaeus), present in the collection of the Zoological Survey of India. Two are males (Z.S.I. Reg. No. 8366, 8374) and three females (Z.S.I. Reg. No. 8365, 8369, 8370), all collected from Calcutta in the year 1906.

The colour of the body and the tail is completely black, with no line of demarcation between the dorsal and ventral aspects. In three out of five specimens, the pinna is of lighter colour than in the other two.

All measurements are in millimetres and are taken after Ellerman (1963).

MEASUREMENTS :

External : 2 ♂♂—Head and body 181, 182 ; tail 190, 231 ; hind-foot 33, 34 ; ear 23, 24.

3 ♀♀—Head and body 145, 147, 178 ; tail 193, 195, 224 ; hind-foot 33·5, 34·5, 34·5 ; ear 19, 21, 24.

Cranial : 1 ♂—Occipitonasal 42·3 ; nasal 16·0 ; palate 22·3 ; palatal-foramina 7·6 ; diastema 12·0 ; upper tooth-row 6·3 ; bulla 7·2.

3 ♀♀—Occipitonasal 36·8, 39·0, 44·2 ; nasal 13·5, 14·0, 16·3 ; palate 19·3, 20·2, 24·0 ; palatal-foramina 6·5, 6·6, 8·9 ; diastema 10·0, 10·8, 13·0 ; upper tooth-row 6·0, 6·1, 6·8 ; bulla 6·8, 7·0, 7·7.

Different views have been put forward as to the causes of melanism. Keeler & King (1941) are of the opinion that melanism acts as a simple Mendelian recessive character. Rohe (1961) found a melanistic population of the Norway Rat (*Rattus norvegicus*), confined to underground sewers. The fact that the population was completely isolated and that the litters were all melanistic led him to believe that it was a true breeding melanistic colony. Svihla's (1956) finding that heat conservation at